

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 39 No. 5

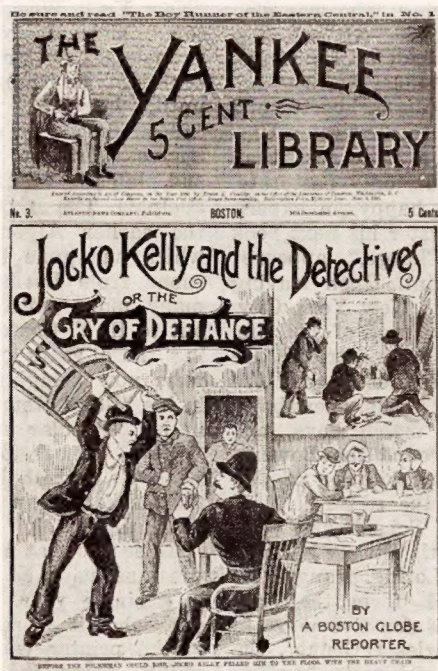
May 15, 1970

Whole No. 452

Horatio Alger, Jr., After Seventy Years

Conclusion

By Morton S. Enslin



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 125

YANKEE 5 CENT LIBRARY

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Horatio Alger, Jr., After Seventy Years

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1857-60 saw him back at the Divinity School, after which interlude he went abroad for a year. Letters to the New York Daily Sun, the Boston Transcript, and other newspapers should have been evidence to Horatio Sr. that his first-born was a writer, not a parson. But Horatio Jr. obediently made a try at it. Upon his return from his month abroad, in addition to acting as a private tutor for a good part of the next three years, he did occasional preaching. He also produced the first of his boys' books: "Frank's Campaign," which was published by A. K. Loring, who was also to bring out so many of his volumes, once Holy Horatio had hit his stride.

On December 8, 1864, he was ordained in Brewster, Massachusetts, and served as pastor of the Brewster Unitarian Church for a little less than two years. It was his only pastorate, and it was not too happy an experience. While in Brewster his next book "Paul Prescott's Charge," appeared with Loring's imprint. Upon leaving Brewster he went to New York City, where he spent the rest of his life. Here he quickly hit his stride. He speedily became interested in the street Arabs—bootblacks, newsboys, baggage-smashers, match boys, and the like—on and around the Bowery. And in 1867, on the invitation of Oliver Optic, then on the editorial staff of "Student and Schoolmate," he wrote his first serial, "Ragged Dick." It clicked at once. Loring arranged its publication in book form the next year, and contracted for five more in the same vein. Charles O'Connor, the first and so able and understanding

long-time superintendent of the famous Newsboy's Lodging House, saw an installment of "Ragged Dick," was delighted with it, and from then on became one of Alger's most devoted friends and champions. The Lodging House was almost a second home to Alger; it was here that he picked up much of his intimate knowledge of those about whom he wrote.

Then followed the flood of books, most of them appearing in serial form in such journals as the "Golden Argosy" (subsequently the "Argosy"), "Young Israel," "Golden Days," the "New York Weekly," "Ballou's Monthly," and, of course, "Student and Schoolmate." Most of these books continued to be published by Loring, until, in 1881, financial reverses caused Loring to close his publishing business and to sell his copyrights and plates to Porter & Coates in Philadelphia. The latter firm reissued all the earlier Alger volumes, each of which had gone through several editions from Loring; and they added many more, until they in turn sold out to H. T. Coates in 1895. But during those years other publishers too were now bringing out Alger: Burt in his "Boys' Home Library"; Munsey in his "Popular series for Boys and Girls"; the ill-fated United States Book Co., which had tried to corner the market; Penn Publishing Co.; and F. M. Lupton.

Alger wrote at a furious rate. Sometimes as many as six books appeared in a single year. Like Samuel Johnson, who, it is said, sent "Rasselas" to the printer without rereading the script, Alger too hustled them off

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post haste, often without bothering even to read his copy. In consequence, it is not too difficult to find an occasional slip, and even minor contradictions, between one chapter and the next. But they are never too serious, and no reader was ever unduly bothered. Of course they are not great literature, and none knew that better than did Alger. Always was he hoping to do a serious book. Too often he was secretly ashamed of the cascade of trivia from the pen which he had hoped would write the Great American Novel. It didn't, for it couldn't. In the anonymous "Timothy Crump's Ward" he had essayed an adult novel—Timothy (the father), a grown man (!), little Ida's guardian, and the titular hero—and Alger even attempted a bit of very elementary sophisticated writing (so utterly foreign to him), with the somewhat sour maiden sister of Timothy venturing to suggest that the baby, which was found on the doorstep in a basket, along with \$300 so sorely needed by the family that fatal day when they were to be evicted for failure to pay the rent, probably belonged to Mr. Crump. Whereupon her nephew Jack retorts, "Maybe she was meant for you." Thereupon Aunt Rachel "tried hard to faint" and Jack in dismay protests, "What have I said?" No, that pen was not intended to write a great adult novel. The revised "Jack's Ward," with Jack the hero and guardian, and with all attempts at sophistication carefully banished, is a much better work.

H. T. Coates was in turn absorbed in 1900, the year after Alger's death, by John C. Winston, who continued to publish and reprint, at the first from the same plates. Winston, however, did not bring out any first edition, that is, first printing of any book. Other publishers did. In addition to those already mentioned were Mershon Co., Thompson and Thomas, Stitt, Cupples and Leon, and Chatterton-Peck — several of which were more or less organically joined. Each of them has a few new titles, and so first editions.

Alger died in Natick, Massachusetts

July 18, 1899. Here his family had lived for many years. His father had moved from Marlborough in 1860 to the local Unitarian church. Here both mother and father had died; here his sister, Olive Cheney, lived. Regularly Horatio had spent a part of most years there, often bringing several of his New York friends with him. He had made another trip abroad, and had traveled considerably in the West of this country, the first time at the suggestion of the canny Mr. Loring, for fresh scenes and new local color. The Famous "Pacific Series" bears witness to this business trip. His death by no means stopped the sale of his books. Actually, far more were sold after his death than during his lifetime. At least twenty-eight of his volumes were published for the first time after his death. Many of them had appeared as serials many years before. Eleven were "completed" by Edward Stratemeyer's famous mill, with the completion ascribed to Arthur M. Winfield in the earlier ones. The claim was that Alger had left the tales uncompleted and with the request that his friend Stratemeyer—destined to be the colossus of American juveniles—finish them. In many of them the touch of Alger is very faint, that of Stratemeyer much more pronounced. But all of the books continued to sell. Many which had been first copyrighted by Loring, Porter & Coates, or Coates were reissued, often in several different-priced editions by firms like Hurst, Donohue, Street and Smith, to mention a few of the host. It is a rare title that has not seen the light of day with less than ten different title pages, and ranging all the way from \$1.25 to 10c. In addition a good number appeared also in 5c paper editions.

An estimate of an average of 125,000 copies per title would not seem excessive. In addition, most of them had been serialized, some two and three times. One serial, "Cast Upon the Breakers"; at least one short novel, "A Fancy of Hers," one of his few girl stories, which was published complete in one issue of Munsey's

magazine; and a large number of short stories — these with his 118 books bring his word coverage to at least eight million.

On August 7, 1907, the Worcester Public Library banned his books from its shelves, "because," said the librarian, "they are not truthful and are too sensational." It may also be remarked, as the Boston "Herald" was quick to point out: Alger had now "been put in the same clan with Mark Twain, Robert M. Chambers, Walt Whitman and other producers of literature whose works have recently been banned from Worcester County libraries."

Other librarians obediently followed suit. Franklin K. Mathiews, chief librarian of the Boy Scouts of America, joined in the crusade a little later, largely to undercut the tremendous sales of the Stratemeyer brain and mill. But Alger books fell under his ban too, at least in popular thinking. Stratemeyer frothed at the mouth and fought back; Alger was at rest and neither knew nor cared. Actually he had foreseen it. Years before he had frankly written: "Times will change. Horsecars will disappear. Boys will no longer black boots in the streets. What I am doing will seem fantastic to coming generations. Nobody will read my books, even assuming they are well-written."

Fifty years ago every library carried shelves of them. They were especially popular on the shelves of Sunday school libraries, for no parent need fear. Alger's heroes did not drink or smoke, at least they didn't after they had turned the corner, which generally was within the first few chapters. Occasionally he hinted that some of the street boys used indecous language, but they did not do it in his pages, and his heroes speedily eschewed it. No risqué utterances, no double entendre wisecracks mar his pages. To be sure, in the quick retort to the young snob who has condescendingly remarked, "I've seen you before," Ragged Dick may reply, whisking around, "Then p'raps you'd like to see me behind." The rich Miss Davenport, anxious to

turn Tom's attention from her poor relative, the far more attractive Mary, can remark to Tom Temple, "I want to show you some engravings." But in both cases Alger was pure as the driven snow. It is we, not he, who detect the vulgar witticism. "Have you any taste for any kind of liquor?" asks Hector's patron. "No, sir," answers Hector promptly. "That is well. Do you play pool?" "No, sir," answers Hector, wondering whither all these questions tended. "I ask because playing pool in public places paves the way for intemperance, as bars are generally connected with such establishments." That is Alger. No wonder parents felt safe. Alger's heroes, generally about fourteen or fifteen years of age, "stoutly built, with a clear, fresh complexion, and a resolute, good-humored face," may occasionally—at the start—be rough and uneducated, if they chance to be street Arabs; in the country, though usually with patched pants, they regularly are the best scholars in the school, always winning the prize, to the great disgust of the foppish and patronizing son of the village magnate. One and all, they are industrious, hard-working, devoted to their parents (frequently a widowed mother and/or younger brothers or sisters). Alger hated snobs, bullies, loafers, counterfeits, oppressors of the poor, and his heroes are always frustrating them. No more perfect product of the basic confidence underlying Deuteronomy can be found than in Alger. "Do right, and you will prosper." Translated into the terms of Alger's world, this meant: Work hard, and you will grow up respectable. "I ain't always going to black boots for a livin'," Ragged Dick insists. "All labor is respectable, my lad," says Mr. Whitney, his patron, "and you have no cause to be ashamed of any honest business." Work hard, and you will prosper. Save your money. Start a bank account. Work nights to remedy your lack of education. Be honest, and you will go up the ladder, will rise from the ranks. His heroes were honest, possessed the homely virtues, and opportunity smiled on them with

the broadest of benevolent grins. A little child or an elderly lady, pulled out of the way of a runaway horse; the beloved son of a wealthy father or a rich young man who had stupidly drunk too much, rescued when he fell of a ferryboat, by our young hero who had bravely dived in, while all the rest stood still; a wealthy and benevolent—usually retired and a bit infirm—gentleman, rescued just as a hold-up man got ready to slug him; these always paid off, and handsomely: a new suit of clothes, a job—sometimes in a counting room; not infrequently, if our hero had been a good student before he had suffered misfortune's blows, as private secretary to his benevolent patron. This was the order of the day. In the last chapter our hero is always well along the road to success; not infrequently in the last paragraph it is remarked, "and it is confidently rumored that he will soon be taken into partnership." Success always involves money. Rarely do his brightest heroes become teachers or doctors—though often their friends, whom they have been able to help, do—no, the hero, though he may have gone back to college, as fortune begins to smile upon him, ends up in *esse* or in *posse* a wealthy merchant. As George Black remarks to Rufus Rushton, as the latter is about to leave selling papers to become Black's partner in a periodical and fancy goods store, "Money makes the mare go' in this world." That is a statement which Alger would never dream of challenging.

"From Rags to Riches"? This was never the actual title of an Alger story, but it is the theme of many of them, and I can think of many worse emphases. Sure, his characters had amazing good fortune, their patrons were uncommonly openhanded, coincidences were very frequent and considerate. So what? Alger was not attempting the stark realism and often so bare literalism which our present day so dearly loves, and which seeks in its own prudish poverty of imagination and forgetfulness of past childhood to strip away these so healthy and necessary ingredients

with the stupid mouthing, "It isn't true." And boys and girls ate it up, with, so far as I can see, no bad effects. There was, and is, plenty of time to see the seamier side. And, after all, it is still not too hard for any kid, if he looks around, to see a dozen "Alger heroes" who started with nothing and did "struggle upward," did "strive and succeed" because they were "strong and steady." Between Superman and the other heroes of the current entertainment media: radio, television, and comics, I for one cast my vote for the man who inspired millions only to be forgotten.

"But his stories are all alike!" So what? And actually, the statement is not quite true. Alger has only one tale to tell, as most preachers have only one sermon to preach; but though he retold it a hundred times, it was always arranged with enough variety of local color and incidents to make it seem fresh and captivating. The real point is, Alger never wrote down to his audience, and we boys sensed it. Perhaps it was because he never grew up. This charge has often been made. But he knew boys, and he loved them; and they knew it and loved him. And to Alger, more than to any other man, is due the credit of breaking the padrone system which was such a blight on many young lives in Alger's New York. Clearing up that traffic, which "Phil, the Fiddler" so definitely did, and which led to the first definite legal protection for children, first in New York and then country-wide, ought not to be forgotten when totting up the final balance.

And actually he did have at least four plots, not one. Plot 1 concerns the city waif—generally in New York, less frequently in Chicago—completely on his own. Ambitious, determined to better himself; good luck in the form of powerful assistance, which never comes from the blue but is always the consequence (even if in geometric proportion) of his own honest exertions, which gives him a new suit of clothes, a bath, the start of a bank account, and a job. From then on the path smooths out, and success

is his.

Plot 2. Here the scene is usually the country. A poor boy, usually the sole stay of a widowed mother, forced from school—which he dearly loved—to support said mother, who is usually in the toils of the unscrupulous village magnate (squire), who holds a mortgage on their cottage house. Our hero is often employed in a local shoe factory or grocery store. Losing his job (never through his own fault), he is either aided in the nick of time by a stranger passing through the village or he goes to the city or to California, always to return in time to pay the mortgage and, eventually, to buy the mansion that the unscrupulous squire (who always has an arrogant bully for a son) has been forced by losses to sell.

Plot 3. A lad believing himself well off and usually at an expensive, or at least select, school finds himself in the first chapter reduced to poverty, generally through the untimely death of a beloved parent. Not infrequently there is a scoundrelly (and poor) stepmother or stepfather who had recently become the wife or husband (as the case may be) of the widowed moneyed parent and who by chicanery—frequently a suppressed or forged will—gains the hero's rightful inheritance. And though sonny always regains it in the end, his adventures in the interim are lively and fascinating.

Plot 4. The hero is a kidnaped heir to a large fortune. Sometimes he appears in the village poorhouse; sometimes as the companion of some evil character—burglar, tramp, or other individual of variously degreed rascality. Often it is quite a struggle before his parentage is discovered and his inheritance realized. At least once our hero, although starting as Jed, the Poorhouse Boy, ends rightly as Sir Robert Fenwick, Bart.; or once again Tony the Tramp turns out to be the Hon. Anthony Middleton, of Middleton Hall.

"A little beyond the usual"? Yes, indeed. "Trash"? No, I am not so sure. They are good stories, for the most part well told, even though many

critics find his English "appallingly bad." His barbers might occasionally be "knights of the scissors," a mere drink a "potation," whiskey either "rotgut" or a "poisonous decoction." But that didn't worry the kids; it did not—and does not—worry me. The stories moved, had interest, and they never left a bad taste in your mouth.

"Nobody will read my books, even assuming they are well-written"? No, Horatio, you're wrong. Millions of people have read them—and some of them are still doing it, though you have been dead for nearly seventy years, and loving you for having done it. You were cheated out of some of the joys of life. You never knew the joy of being wed to the girl of your dreams. Your father saw to it that Patience Stires, whom you loved and who loved you, slipped out of your life. And to your grave you bore that mark. It showed in many a page of your books—parents there did not so interfere, and when they had—in a chapter long before the story began—they bitterly repented their folly and were fortunately able to make rich amends. Your own experiences as a parish minister were far from happy, but you never sneered—or caused any reader to sneer—at either church or minister, although sometimes your deacons were of a pretty mean and ornery sort. You believed kids could make good, and you helped them to do it; you never helped us to be nas-

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ty-minded and think it smart; you
loved us, and some of us loved you.

"Horatio Alger, Jr., you were once my greatest joy;
I revelled in your stories when a happy care-free boy;
There were William Makepeace Thackeray, and novelists of note,
There were Bulwer, Scott, and Dickens, but they got my childish goat;
They didn't have the pep and zip, Horatio, that you did,
For you got underneath the vest of every blooming kid,
And a myriad young critics felt your fascinating punch,
So they crowned you king, Horatio, of the literary bunch.

"Horatio Alger, Jr., all the types of boys you drew,
Poor urchins of the street, revealed the gentle side of you;
There were 'Ragged Dick' and 'Tattered Tom,' with others of their kind,
Who all bespoke an honest heart, a pure unselfish mind;
Through trials and temptations they most perilously passed
Till virtue was triumphant, good Horatio, at the last.
And as their thorny paths through life your humble heroes trod,
Each chapter was illumined by your simple faith in God.

"Horatio Alger, Jr., long ago your busy pen
Was laid aside, but to the hearts of grizzled, gray-haired men
Come visions of their idol, and your name they often bless,
For you helped them not a little in their measure of success;
You were loved by hosts, Horatio, and you filled an honored place;
The memory of all your good time never can efface;
And, if but a single blossom each old boy admirer gave,
What a mountain of sweet fragrance there would rise above your grave."*

*This poem, which many of us would say is ours too, was written by Malcolm Douglas, and published in the New York "Herald," December 12, 1920; it was reprinted in the Boston "Herald," June 8, 1928.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

- 312. The Newberry Library, Serials Division, 60 West Walton St., Chicago, Ill. 60610 (New member)
- 313. John Riley, 132 Livingston St., Brooklyn, N. Y. 11201 (Former member)
- 314. Alfred G. Birkenmeier, 8 West Peterson Lane, Normandy Beach, N. J. 08739 (New member)
- 81. W. R. Johnson, 1508 6th Ave., S. W., Ardmore, Okla. 73401 (Correction of address)
- 315. Edwin P. Smart, RFD #2 Cony Road, Augusta, Me. 04330 (New memb.)
- 316. Harold L. Hiss, 8 Pond Road, Walden, N. Y. 12586 (New member)
- 317. E. R. Brooks, 12 Oak St., Brattleboro, Vt. 05301 (New member)

DIME NOVELS FOR SALE

Have Tip Top Weekly, Wide Awake Library, a few 1895's Buffalo Bill Stories and New Buffalo Bill Weekly, New Nick Carter Weekly. SAE for List. All Reasonable.

John Lee Sims, 6708½ Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90038

FRANK JAMES RIDES AGAIN DOWN THE DIME NOVEL OUTLAW TRAIL

By Colonel Charles D. Randolph (Buckskin Bill)

Frank James rides again down the dime novel outlaw trail,
Leading his band of Missouri outlaws
He holds up banks, trains and stage coaches,
And robs the U. S. mail.

Frank James rides again with his band of border bandits
On a sacking, pillaging, plundering, robbing, rampage;
Galloping through the old yellowbacked dime novels
Creating exciting exploits on every page.

Frank James rides again leading his outlaw gang
Through the rolling Missouri clay hills,
And out across the Kansas plains,
They rob stage coaches, banks and trains.

Frank James rides again down the dime novel outlaw trail;
He lived to become a legend in his own time,
The thrilling stories about his desperate exploits,
Were sold at newsstands for a dime.

Frank James finally gives up the dime novel outlaw trail;
He comes in and surrendered
And handed his belt and guns to the governor of Missouri,
And was acquitted at his trial.

Frank James, The Dime Novel hero who rode the outlaw trail,
Finally settled down on the old James farm
In Clay County in the Missouri Hills
While stories of his life were published
With all of their pomp and thrills.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ed: I am sending you my subscription to the Roundup. I would suggest that you raise the price of the Roundup to the five dollar figure so that you could meet your expenses and maybe add a feature or two to the magazine. Say, issue a double issue twice a year, also include more letters from members. Also, how about changing to two separate categories or listings, one listing only individuals and another listing the various institutions. It would be much easier to locate an individual member in the list if one didn't have to wade through the numerical list. I have missed the comments of Ralph F. Cummings in the Roundup recently. I hope that I haven't bored you with my ideas. Your book friend, James F. Stroecker, 6304 Oakland Ave., St.

Louis, Mo. 63139. I am not bored at all, and will act on your ideas immediately. The next listing of the membership will be in two parts, one in numerical order and one in alphabetic order. This will be issued in addition to the regular issue of the Roundup. There is no need to raise the price of subscription. I believe \$3 is too high already. Extra page issues will be issued more often than in the past and I plan to issue one supplement per year. The first of these is scheduled for this month, the bibliographic listing of NEW BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY by J. Edward Leithead.

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: I have never realized just how much fun it is, just to read and reread topics I had enjoyed so much in the past. It's great. —Louis T. O'Desky, Toledo, Ohio.

ODDS 'N' ENDS

By Jack Schorr

Of all the publishers of juvenile literature, I think that Saalfeld Publishing Co. (Saal) published more of the unusual boys' books in the non-series variety than any other publishing house. My experience with their selections has been favorable. I find every one I have come across interesting reading, good readable print, and quality bindings and paper, in their first editions, of course.

I have before me one of their non-series boys' books, "Marking The Boundary" by Edward S. Billings, illustrated by John Henderson Garnsey with fine pen and ink drawings, published by Saalfeld 1900, a first edition.

The binding is rust colored with red letters "Marking The Boundary" and a portion of the north and western portion of the United States, with the Dominion of Canada boundary line. The spine has gold lettering, title, author and publisher. It is an absorbing tale of two boys, Tom Troxwell and Joe Conklin, who join up with the United States Northern Boundary Survey, which has the job of finishing the laying of the Fortyninth parallel which is part of the boundary between the United States and the British Provinces. Their adventures included Indians and wild animals of the Territory at that time, and rough men of the party, and plenty of bugs.

These two lads were assigned to the Naturalist Division of the Surveying party. In their search for unusual insects, they run into more than one strange adventure. This, like many of Saalfeld's selections, was worth reading.

There is a big difference between the first edition of the early Saalfelds. For example, Auto Boys series by Braden and the reprints of later vintage, and the difference is quality.

Some of the now hard to find Winfield and Bonehill books were published by Saalfeld.

Whenever I see a first edition by this publishing company, I am interested, because I know I have found

something that's not "run of the mill."

RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

REAL WEST ANNUAL 1970. Charlton Publications, Charlton Building, Derby, Conn. 06418. Price 75c. LEG-END MAKER OF THE WEST—ERASTUS BEADLE, by John C. Kunzog. This is a reprint of Mr. Kunzog's article which appeared earlier in Real West Magazine. An excellent biographical sketch of Erastus Beadle and his contribution to the magical aura of the West.

THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL GREEN SHEET, Tuesday, January 27, 1970, TO BE FRANK, MERRIWELL WAS A VIRTUOUS SQUARE by Jack Smith. One view of Frank Merriwell. Seems to take the lead from articles which appeared in Yankee Magazine and Sport Magazine. (Sent in by Harry L. Lane).

BROWN ALUMNI MONTHLY, Brown University, Providence, R. I., ON STAGE: COME RAIN, SHINE OR INEBRIATION, by A. B. Another article on Frank Merriwell comparing his standards to today's.

(Sent in by John T. Dizer.)

YANKEE, February, 1970. Yankee, Inc., Dublin, N. H. 03444. WHERE HAVE YOU GONE, FRANK MERRIWELL? by Curtis B. Norris. An article deploring the present availability of reading matter of the Merriwell caliber, although the writer feels they were poorly written. Reviews the Frank Acker collection and Acker's correspondence with the great Gilbert Patten. Well illustrated with one in full color. Price, 50c.

AMERICAN BOOK COLLECTOR. November-December 1969. W. B. Thorsen, Pub., 1822 School St., Chicago, Ill. 60657. THE GREAT DETECTIVE TEAM: OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, by J. Edward Leithead. Mr. Leithead continues his review of dime novel heroes with a study of the Bradys and their numerous appearances in dime novels. Eight illustrations including one of the author. Price, \$1.00.

REAL WEST MAGAZINE. Febru-

ary 1970. Charlton Pub., Charlton Bldg., Derby, Conn. 06418. MY YEAR WITH BUFFALO BILL'S WILD WEST SHOW, by Harry E. Webb. Part II of this article completes the writer's personal experiences with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show during the 1910 season. Price, 50c. Real West Magazine continues to feature a pictorial series called DIME NOVELS THAT GLORIFIED THE WEST.

DIME NOVEL COLLECTORS BOOK SHELF

JULIA HARRINGTON, WINNEBAGO, IOWA, 1913, by Richard Bissell. Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Mass. Price \$7.95. An excellently illustrated book of the fictionalized diary of a young girl in Iowa in 1913. Contains one section about dime novels and popular love stories of the time.

NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

Never saw so much sickness as there is around now — I've been knocked out for a month or so, so if you didn't get a Christmas card from me, you will understand.

So many people with eye cataracts I don't understand it, must be something in the air.

I had trouble all last summer and fall with eye trouble, but they are cleared up very well now. I use cold water to bathe them, and it helps a lot.

Jack Clark of Bridgeport, Conn., called me up, he sure has had a long spell of sickness, and he still loves to read Flynns, Sport, Detective Story and Top Notch, and other magazines,

as well as Frank Reades that he hasn't read. A great reader, help him to get well by sending him some of his favorites to read, to help take his pain away.

Frank Acker called me up on Christmas day, saying they just got over the flu.

A while back George Sahr says he wasn't feeling too hot, it slowed him down a lot, but when he had the chance to read some of the old Pluck and Lucks and James Boys Weeklies in his collection, he did so. We all do when we get the chance, eh, George? George says he first became acquainted with Ralph P. Smith, 45 years ago or more—and believes it was in 1924 that he saw Ralph's ad in a Popular Mechanics mag of having old novels for sale. It wasn't long before he got to know Bob Smeltzer, and the rest of the big 4 at that time. Those were the days.

Back numbers Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup, Nos. 1 to 237, some reprints, 12 for \$1.00 or all for \$21. Sent postpaid. You also get Dime Novel Catalogue, Birthday No. 2, indexes, #1 Pioneer and Scouts of the West.

Can you beat it?

Ralph F. Cummings

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So. Grafton, Mass. 01560

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